

One day after a Department of Veterans Affairs assessment team visited Silver Cross Hospital to evaluate the potential for converting the hospital into a veteran's health facility, Rep. Debbie Halvorson (IL-11) was informed by VA Undersecretary for Health Dr. Robert Petzel that the team sees Joliet's soon to be vacated Silver Cross Hospital as an "excellent facility" that, "looks like it will meet [the VA's] needs."

"Fighting for our veterans and making sure they have the best access to care is a huge priority for me," said Halvorson. "Bringing a veterans health facility to Silver Cross would make quality health care more accessible in my district and the region - and our veterans deserve that. Yesterday's visit by the VA assessment team and the words of confidence from Undersecretary Petzel are encouraging steps forward towards expanding veterans' health services in our region. I will continue working to bring the needs of veterans in our district to the attention of the VA, and to ensure that we expand access to health care for our veterans."

Yesterday's update came during a House Veterans Affairs committee hearing to discuss the Veteran Health Administration's FY2011 fiscal year budget. Halvorson questioned newly appointed VA Undersecretary for Health Dr. Robert Petzel about current progress on Silver Cross and other veterans' health related issues.

Halvorson's questions come less than a month after she questioned then Acting Undersecretary of Health Dr. Gerald Cross at a similar hearing, who stated that the facility is actively being considered to meet needed services expansion in the region. In that meeting, Cross acknowledged that no final decision has been made regarding the transfer of the Silver Cross facility, but the VA is actively considering the Silver Cross facility for services expansion in the area.

As the only member from Illinois on the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Congresswoman Halvorson has been a strong advocate for military families and veterans. In her first year in office, Halvorson introduced and fought for several pieces of legislation aimed at helping wounded veterans and military families, including the *Families of Disabled Veterans Work Opportunity Act*, HR 3908, and the *Wounded Warrior Caregiver Assistance Act*, HR 2898.

A video of the Silver Cross portion of the hearing and a transcript of Halvorson's exchange with Undersecretary Petzel are attached below.

## Veteran Affairs Hearing Transcript

[Click here](#) to watch video of the hearing

Rep. Halvorson: Thank you Mr. Chairman and congratulations Dr. Petzel on your confirmation. And I just wanted to let you know that I worked very closely with Dr. Cross on a medical facility in my district that I'm hoping to bring to Joliet, Silver Cross Hospital. I'm sure your wonderful staff has kept you up-to-date and if not, I'm sure they will. I didn't know if there was any light to shed on this for me or if there are any updates for me or if you have any questions for me.

Dr. Petzel: Well Congresswoman Halvorson that's incredibly timely, I was just told, about five minutes ago, that, as you know, we just finished a site visit and the word that came back is that this is an excellent facility.

Rep. Halvorson: It is.

Dr. Petzel: We're very optimistic that the Silver Cross Medical Facility, is going to be, is going to meet our needs and is going to work very well into our system.

Rep. Debbie Halvorson: Great, because it's something that is so very important to my district and I know we had the district work period last week and everywhere I went people wanted an update. This is something we are expecting to come to fruition and I just wanted to make sure that it was fresh in your memory and on your radar. It is very, very important to us.

Dr. Petzel: It is, it is.

